

MEMORANDUM

13 Feb 71

TO: CMC

SUBJECT: Youth & Student Forum

Per your request, following are my impressions of what took place at the Youth & Student Forum on 11 February:

The audience comprised approximately 150-200 employees, perhaps a little less than one half of whom were younger employees. A block of almost fifty young employees was seated front and center. From the context of the questions and comments it appeared that a fair number of them were new CT's.

Briefly, the panel stated that recent events had not hurt the Agency's image in the country. In fact, over the last three or four years our image has improved considerably. This impression is drawn from the graduate schools in the country where the Agency is recruiting. We have more qualified applicants than we can possibly handle. On the other side of the scale, although the Agency's attrition rate is normal, more and more of those younger employees who depart the Agency state that their reason for departing is lack of meaningful work, and they don't appear able to look forward to meaningful work with the Agency.

The latter part of the panel's presentation sparked the first question from a young officer front and center: Is the Agency doing anything to improve its fitness report system; is anything being done to make the fitness report more objective, more suited

to the individual? The panel tried to soften its answer with doubletalk: Fitness reports are hard to change...every eighteen months there is a new attempt to change the fitness report system,.. OMS is doing some things that could help to change the fitness report, and so on....

This, I feel, set the stage for the response which followed. I do not recall all of the questions and comments, but the spirit of what took place is as follows:

a. Contrary to what you had to say [] about the Agency's image improving over the last few years, Mr. [] I submit that "the Agency's image is ROTTEN!" This is certainly true among the more distinguished, older universities in the country. I can't understand you why you can overlook this, Mr. [] why not "tell it like it is"? ...Before the problem can be solved, it must be faced honestly...the Agency is going to have increasingly difficulty getting a representative cross section of qualified young people if something isn't done about this problem...When I go to a cocktail party, I am ashamed to say that I work for the CIA, and I have had people ask me how I can stand to work for an organization like the CIA ... *What is being done to improve the image of the CIA?*

[] answered these comments by saying that the Agency doesn't recruit at the "older more distinguished universities" any more; that the Agency restricts its recruiting to selected graduate schools, and that the facts speak for themselves - over 800 applicants per month and no apparent troubles from the graduate programs with which the

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Agency works. We occasionally get individuals from the "older more distinguished universities" after they have completed their military service, have gone to work, and have become "just like anybody else".

b. Further questions and comments: Why do you suppose so many young employees are leaving the Agency?...If the Agency doesn't change its attitude toward young people, more will leave...I don't think you are prepared to have large numbers of young CT's leave the Agency! It's typical of an organization like this, which has come under severe adverse pressure, to develop an inferiority complex and try to cover up its problems rather than bring them out into the open and solve them.

c. Twice, representatives of the younger CT's made the point that their criticism was not being voiced for its own sake; that they are just as committed to the interests of the Agency as is the panel, but this commitment is strained by the Agency's apparent unwillingness to face its problems.

My impression was that the panel - and rightfully so - was just not the group to respond to these kinds of questions. The panel should have recognized [REDACTED]


[REDACTED]

The OTR moderator wrapped up the session very tactfully, I thought, by stating that what had taken place was a forum, not a confrontation, and it looked as though more sessions like it were needed.

It appeared to me that the overall audience was sympathetic to the questioners, not to the panel; this from the group of [REDACTED]

given to questions and comments. One gentlemen in his fifties noted that the comments of the young people were well taken and all should

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consider~~able~~ that after being processed through rigid Agency application standards, the young CT's undoubtedly represented a very conservative faction of American youth - imagine what the remainder is like!

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